

# Factsheet

## National Animal Identification System (NAIS)

### **What is NAIS?**

NAIS is a modern, streamlined information system that helps animal health officials respond quickly and effectively to disease outbreaks or animal health events in the United States. NAIS—a State-Federal-Industry partnership—is designed to:

- Increase the United States' disease response capabilities
- Limit the spread of animal diseases
- Minimize animal losses and economic impact
- Protect producers' livelihoods
- Maintain market access

### **Why is NAIS important?**

In order to respond quickly and effectively to an animal disease event (whether it is a single incident or a full scale outbreak), animal health officials need to know which animals are involved, where they are located, when they were there, and what other animals might have been exposed. NAIS provides standards for identifying both animals and locations, and when coupled with electronic resources to retrieve the data, enhances animal disease traceability. The sooner reliable data are available, the sooner affected animals can be located, appropriate response measures can be established, and disease spread can be halted.

### **Does the ability to trace diseases need improvement?**

Today, many disease response and animal traceback efforts are time-consuming, costly, and difficult. Tracing infected animals often involves an exhaustive search of available records and documents—most of which are paper-based—as well as interviews with producers, market operators, harvest facility owners/operators, veterinarians, and others involved with the care and management of the animal(s) in question. Additionally, these records are not consistent in nature or standardized on a national level. And while many animals may possess some form of identification (eartag, tattoo, brand, etc.), those identification methods provide only minimal information that could be used to successfully trace a disease to its source.

Disease tracing involves the use of modern technologies to collect, store, and make available data that animal health officials need to conduct animal disease surveillance, eradication, and control programs. A reliable and cost-effective information system equips officials to trace the movement of diseased animals and identify other potentially exposed animals in order to contain disease. Fundamental to this system is accurate and retrievable identification of as many animals as possible.



### **Did you know?**

- Participation in State/Federal Cooperative disease programs has decreased as diseases are eradicated. For example, less than 12 percent of the U.S. calf crop is officially identified using brucellosis vaccination eartags.
- An animal can be identified multiple times for multiple purposes yet still not be fully traceable. This is caused when identification methods are not universal, and the systems can't "talk" to each other.

## ***How do I participate in NAIS?***

**1**

### **Obtain a Premises Identification Number (PIN).**

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To obtain a PIN, contact your State, Territorial, or Tribal NAIS Administrator. Participants may request a PIN by completing the application form online or by mailing or faxing the form to their State, Territorial, or Tribal NAIS contact. Information on NAIS contacts in each State is available at the following link:  
[http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/contact\\_us/directories.shtml](http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/contact_us/directories.shtml).

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### **Identify your animals.**

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After you have obtained a PIN, you can participate in the second component of NAIS—animal identification. The only requirement is that you use NAIS-approved devices/tags. These devices feature 15-digit Animal Identification Numbers (AINs) that are unique to each animal. Group/lot Identification Numbers (GINs) are used in species that typically move through the production chain as a group. A list of authorized devices and manufacturers is available at the following link:  
[http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/animal\\_id/ain\\_mngt\\_sys.shtml](http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/animal_id/ain_mngt_sys.shtml).

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### **Report certain high-risk animal movements.**

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You may elect to report certain types of animal movements to State or privately owned animal tracking databases (ATDs). USDA realizes that attempting to record all animal movements is not practical, nor is it the intent of NAIS. Rather, the focus of NAIS is on the type of movement and its potential impact on spreading a disease. A list of the types of movements that should be reported can be found in the *NAIS User Guide*, available at:  
<http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/naislibrary/userguide.shtml>.  
A list of available ATDs may be found at:  
[http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/naislibrary/documents/guidelines/NAIS\\_Interim\\_ATD\\_Listing.pdf](http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/naislibrary/documents/guidelines/NAIS_Interim_ATD_Listing.pdf).

## **Additional Information**

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For more information about NAIS, contact:

USDA, APHIS Veterinary Services  
4700 River Road, Unit 43  
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231  
Telephone (301) 734-0799  
Fax (301) 734-7964  
[www.usda.gov/nais](http://www.usda.gov/nais)



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## *Premises Registration*

**Q: *What is premises registration?***

A: The first component of NAIS is premises registration—an effort to establish an accurate, current record of all locations in the United States where livestock and/or poultry are raised, housed, or boarded.

**Q: *What is a premises identification number (PIN)?***

A: A PIN is a nationally unique, 7-digit code that includes both letters and numbers. Similar to a rural 911 address used by first responders to pinpoint the location of an emergency, the PIN allows animal health officials to quickly location animals that may be affected by an animal disease event. Knowing where animals are actually located—rather than the mailing addresses of their owners—is the key to rapid, accurate, and cost-effective disease response.

**Q: *Am I required to get a PIN?***

A: NAIS provides the opportunity for producers that are not part of a disease program to voluntarily participate in national health safeguarding efforts.

To standardize data, USDA is using NAIS data elements, including the PIN, for the administration of Federal disease programs. A PIN is not required if the animal at the premises is not in a federally-regulated disease program.

Individual States may choose to require PINs within their State, based on local needs.

**Q: *What will it cost?***

A: Obtaining a PIN is free.

**Q: *Why should I get a PIN?***

A: All livestock producers and animal owners are encouraged to obtain a PIN, regardless of the number of animals present, because animal diseases (such as avian influenza, foot-and-mouth disease, and vesicular stomatitis) can spread whether an animal leaves its home premises or not.

**Q: *How do I get a PIN?***

A: The application process is quick and simple—it requires completing a short form with your contact information. The basic information you will be asked to provide includes:

- Name of entity
- Contact person for premises
- Street address, city, State, and Zip or postal code of the premises
- Contact phone number
- Operation type
- Species at premises
- Date activated
- Alternative phone numbers

Once the form is completed and the information is validated, you will be issued a nationally unique premises identification number, or PIN.

Premises registration forms are available from your State, Territorial, or Tribal NAIS Administrator and on department of agriculture Web sites in many States. To contact the NAIS Administrator in your area, click on the following link or cut and paste it into your Web browser:  
[http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/contact\\_us/directories.shtml](http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/contact_us/directories.shtml)

**Q: *How will USDA and others use my PIN?***

A: Animal health officials can use premises information to quickly locate animals that have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk of exposure. This information allows them to better assess the circumstances, inform producers as necessary, take precise actions to address the situation, minimize hardships, and speed disease eradication efforts. Premises information can also be used to quickly define which regions of our country are not affected by an outbreak (regionalize or compartmentalize)—keeping markets open for unaffected producers and preventing unnecessary movement restrictions.

It is important to remember that individuals' private information and confidential business information are protected from disclosure by Federal law.

## **Additional Information**

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# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## *Animal Identification*

**Q: *What is animal identification?***

A: The second component of NAIS is animal identification, which provides a uniform numbering system for identifying animals.

**Q: *What is an animal identification number (AIN)?***

A: The AIN is a unique 15-digit number that stays with the animal for its lifetime. This number links the animal to its premises of origin (birthplace or location where the animal was first identified). The AIN is imprinted on identification devices with a space between every third digit to improve readability. For example: 840 234 567 890 123

- The first three digits of the AIN comprise the country code—840 is the United States.
- “840” AINs can only be acquired by locations that have a PIN.

Together, the 15 digits provide a unique identifier for the animal anywhere in the world.

**Q: *Do I need to identify my animals?***

A: Animals that are moved from one location to another, where the risk of disease exposure increases (e.g., auctions, feedlots, fairs, sporting events, or veterinary clinics), should be identified. Some animals may be identified individually or as a group.

Identification devices are available for use with the following species: Cattle and Bison, Swine, Sheep and Goats, Cervids (deer and elk), Equines (horses, mules, donkeys, burros), and Camelids (llamas and alpacas).

Household pets (cats and dogs) and animals not listed above (with the exception of poultry) do not need to participate in the animal identification portion of NAIS.

**Q: *What is an “840” AIN device?***

A: “840” AIN devices/tags meet NAIS standards and have been approved for use in system. They are available in radio frequency identification (RFID) tags and injectable transponders, as well as visual-only tags.

“840” AIN devices, with the exception of injectable transponders, must contain:

- the 15-digit animal identification number (AIN) bearing the “840” prefix,
- the U.S. Shield, and
- the words, “Unlawful to Remove”.

**Q: *Why should I choose 840 AIN devices over other available forms of ID?***

A: Producers and animal owners should consider using 840 AIN devices whenever individual animal ID is needed. Animal health officials are able to use the AINs contained on NAIS-approved devices, in conjunction with PINs, to quickly determine where suspect animals are located and what other animals might have been exposed. The use of 840 AIN identification devices improves disease traceability and enhances national animal disease response capabilities.

**Q: *Where can I purchase 840 AIN devices?***

A: Producers and owners should contact authorized AIN manufacturers for the AIN device managers in their area. A list of authorized AIN devices and AIN manufacturers is available at the following link: [www.usda.gov/nais/840](http://www.usda.gov/nais/840).

**Q: *How much do 840 AIN devices cost?***

A: The costs associated with animal identification vary depending on animal species and method of identification selected by the producer/owner. For example: visual plastic eartags cost ~\$1 to \$2; button-like radio frequency eartags cost ~ \$2 to \$3; and injectable transponders cost up to ~\$20. Additional costs may be incurred if the producer/animal owner requires assistance in applying the devices.

**Q: *How do I apply 840 AIN devices?***

A: Identification devices can be applied by the owners themselves or by tagging service providers; additionally, owners can use the services of an approved tagging site provider or veterinarian to apply the devices to their animals. Livestock owners should first check with State or Tribal animal health authorities to find out what animal identification options and requirements may already be in place in their State or Tribe.

**Q: *Can I use 840 AIN devices for other purposes?***

A: 840 AIN devices can be used anytime official individual animal ID is needed. These devices equip you to use the same identification system for more than one purpose, including participation in State/Federal Cooperative animal health programs; in marketing programs such as age-, source-, and process-verification, quality assurance, or Country of Origin Labeling (COOL); on official paperwork such as Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVIs) or health certificates; and, in genetic programs and breed registries.

**Q: *Are there any restrictions regarding the use of 840 AIN devices?***

A: 840 AIN devices are official and cannot be removed from the identified animal or passed on to another person, such as a neighbor. Producers and owners should keep track of the devices for recordkeeping purposes. 840 AIN devices can only be used on animals born in the United States.

## Additional Information

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# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## *Animal Tracing*

### ***Q: What is animal tracing?***

A: Animal tracing is the ability of animal health officials to use movement records to quickly determine where infected animals have been and what other animals have come into contact with them. Animal tracing makes it easier to determine the scope of an animal disease event and locate potentially infected or exposed animals more quickly.

### ***Q: Am I required to report animal movements?***

A: In NAIS, it is your choice to report animal movements. If you do choose to report an animal movement activity, you can choose which of the NAIS-compliant Animal Tracking Databases (ATDs) you would like to use.

However, NAIS does not replace or take precedence over State brand laws or other State reporting requirements regarding animal movement activity.

### ***Q: Why should I report animal movements?***

A: When there is a disease outbreak or animal health event, the ATDs provide timely, accurate records that show where your animals have been and what other animals have come into contact with them. This will allow animal health officials to know whether or not your animals might potentially be affected and take appropriate steps to protect their health. Your animals can also be excluded from disease suspicion.

### ***Q: What types of movements should be reported?***

A: The suggestions on which movements to report are based upon the risk of disease transmission.

Movements of your animals to other locations (or premises) where they come into contact with numerous other animals from various locations is referred to as “commingling.” When animals commingle, the chance of coming into contact with or spreading disease is increased, and therefore, these movements are the most important to report.

Movements of animals within your own farm/ranch boundaries, including non-contiguous locations if under the same management, have a lower risk of animal disease transmission. These would be a lower priority to report, if they are reported at all. Animal movement activity and location changes can also be recorded in production management records as part of a herd/flock biosecurity program.

### ***Q: How do I report animal movements?***

A: Reporting varies depending on the ATD used. Contact information for all NAIS-compliant ATDs can be found at:  
[http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/naislibrary/documents/guidelines/NAIS\\_ATDs\\_for\\_web.pdf](http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/naislibrary/documents/guidelines/NAIS_ATDs_for_web.pdf)

**Q: *Is there a cost associated with reporting animal movements?***

A: There may be a cost associated with using an ATD to report animal movements, depending on what system is used. Some ATDs are private, while others are managed by a State department of agriculture. You will need to contact the ATD for pricing information:  
[http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/naislibrary/documents/guidelines/NAIS\\_ATDs\\_for\\_web.pdf](http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/naislibrary/documents/guidelines/NAIS_ATDs_for_web.pdf)

**Q: *How will USDA and others use this information?***

A: During an animal health event where a disease traceback or investigation is required, authorized State and/or Federal animal health officials will request necessary animal movement data from the various private or State-owned systems using the Animal Trace Processing System (ATPS). The ATPS, a Federal software application, is used to post a request for information regarding the location and movements of suspect animals.

Records specifically related to the investigation and defined in the request will be made available to animal health officials. This involves only the AIN/ GIN, PIN, date, and event code such as move-in, move-out information, for specific animals on specific dates.

The animal health officials will use this information to locate potentially infected animals and take appropriate action to prevent further spread of the disease.

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